

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL  
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT  
NORTH ADAMS**

**INFORMANT: PHYLLIS GRISWOLD  
INTERVIEWER: JAMES IVANCIC  
DATE: MAY 18, 1988  
PLACE: PHYLLIS GRISWOLD'S APARTMENT**

**J = JAMES  
P = PHYLLIS**

**SG-NA-T017**

Interviewer begins in mid-sentence:

...Shifting Gears Project. The interview is taking place May 18, 1988 in her apartment in Adams.

J: First off, before we talk about your uh, your work experience at Sprague, I'd like to find out a little bit more about your family background if I can. Um, uh, how long have you lived in this area?

P: I've always lived in (--) I was born in Adams.

J: Born in Adams. [P: Uh huh] Uh huh.

P: Then I lived here until, oh let's see. Well twenty-eight years ago we moved to Cheshire. [J: Umhm] And we [few word unclear]. And then I sold it and come back to Adams again.

J: We meaning you and your husband?

P: My mother and I. [J: Uh huh] Yup.

J: And uh, so you were, you were born in Adams did you say?

P: Umhm.

J: Uh, what year was that?

P: Oh dear! [Laughs] 24, 1924.

J: 1924? [P: Umhm] And uh, had your family lived in this community for many years, or in generations?

P: Yeah, to my father.

J: Going back how far?

P: Oh dear, don't ask me, please. All I know is that uh, my father was born here too. So. My mother wasn't. My mother was born in Greenfield.

J: In Greenfield, uh huh.

P: Yeah. And then after she married my father, she moved to Adams.

J: Umhm. How did they happen to meet? Do you know?

P: My father was in the service.

J: I see. [P: Yeah] That would have been during World War I?

P: Uh huh. Yeah. And he was over (--) At that time they um, were guarding uh, the bridges.

J: I'm sorry. I didn't (--)

P: He was in the Guards.

J: Oh, National Guard? [P: Uh huh] I see.

P: Yeah. And they met there. Mother was in high school and he was in the service. And they met.

J: Uh huh. In Greenfield?

P: No, in Charlemont.

J: Oh, Charlemont, I see.

P: Charlemont, yeah. [Chuckles]

J: He was stationed there in Charlemont?

P: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah. [J: Uh huh] Now, and then from there he went to uh, Mexican border, then he came back. And then he went over [unclear] World War I.

J: Umhm. Uh, that was the Mexican border wars. I guess that was during the twenties, wasn't it? Uh, 19 (--) Just after World War I I believe.

P: That was just before World War I.

J: Just before, uh huh.

P: Just before. [J: Yeah] Yeah.

J: And uh, so that was your father, correct? Yeah. Uh, what about your grandparents? Were they also from this area?

P: My grandmother was from Adams. And my grandfather originally came from uh, Dalton.

J: Now was that on your father's side?

P: My father's side.

J: Uh huh.

P: My mother's side, her people always came from Greenfield.

J: I see. [P: Yeah] And the family went back even further, um, being from this area.

P: I really, I really can't tell you.

J: Yeah. Before your grandparents you're really not sure uh, [P: no] where they were from and (--)

P: No. My, well as far as I say my grandmother was born here [J: I see] in Adams, on my father's side. But my mother's side, they came from Greenfield. [J: Umhm] So I really can't tell you.

J: Yeah. What did your father do? What sort of work?

P: My father was a carpenter.

J: Carpenter. Uh huh. [P: Umhm] Did he have his own business?

P: No, he worked for uh, Flaherty's.

J: And, and were they here in town, in Adams?

P: Uh, yeah, recently. They, they worked in out-of-state, uh, construction jobs for construction bridge, construction.

J: I see, but they were based in Adams. [P: Umhm, umhm] And, and your mother, was she a homemaker, or did she work outside the home?

P: Mother never worked. [J: Umhm] She never worked until um, oh my god, my father had a stroke. And that was uh, just before World War II. [J: Umhm] That was about '41 I'd say. And then she went to work in a store, at Hannah Brooks Grocery Store.

J: Where was that? Do you remember? [P: Yup] In Adams?

P: On Friend Street in Adams.

J: On Front Street?

P: Friend.

J: Friend Street.

P: Friend Street. That's not in operation anymore. That was just a small [J: umhm], you know, one of those small stores.

J: Yeah. What is there now at that site?

P: Nothing.

J: Nothing at all?

P: no.

J: It's just an empty lot now?

P: Uh, no. They just closed the store up. He lives, I guess, up over the store, if he's still living. [J: I see] Yeah.

J: Uh huh. And uh, did you have brothers and sisters?

P: I have, uh huh. I have two sisters and I had two brothers.

J: Umhm. What was (--) All of them still living, or have some died?

P: Um, my two sisters live in Adams. My oldest brother, he moved from Adams to Tennessee. [J: Umhm] And my other brother, he passed away here, uh, two years ago. [J: I see] Um.

J: Um. And uh, your husband is now deceased?

P: I, I'm not married.

J: Oh, not married.

P: No. I'm preferably an old maid. [Laughs]

J: Oh, okay. Okay, I'm sorry.

P: Oh, don't, don't apologize.

J: I think I called you Mrs.

P: No, no, no, that's all right. Yup.

J: That's, I guess just something you assume. Um, or I assumed anyway. [P: Yes] Um, okay. So um, you grew up in Adams. [P: Umhm] Where did you go to school?

P: Umhm. Yeah, there were schools in Adams.

J: Yeah, what school was that?

P: I went to, first I went to Commercial Street. Then when we moved to Rumford, I went to Rumford School. [J: Umhm] Then I went up to, to junior high school there. That's on Commercial Street. [J: Umhm] That's what, for the little ones now. [J: Umhm] And then I went to their, old high school is not there anymore.

J: Umhm. And what, what was it called? Was it Adams High School? Was that the name of it?

P: Adams High, umhm.

J: Umhm. [P: Umhm] So then uh, this was before there was any Hoosick Valley High School and (--)

P: Oh yeah. It was in I think, I went to work in '40, '43 at Sprague's. [J: umhm] And before that I worked at the Paper Mill. So I say about '41, '42. [J: Umhm] Yeah.

J: You mean graduation from high school in '41 or '42?

P: No, I finished my junior year and I didn't go back.

J: Oh, I see. [P: um] So um, you left school then and went to work uh, in a mill did you say? [P: Umhm] Which one was that?

P: Paper Mill. [J: Paper Mill.] I call it Bright Waters. It's now um, Rochester, Rochester Paper Mill. It was Bright Waters when I was growing up.

J: I see. Is that here in Adams?

P: Yeah, down in [unclear]. The paper mill down in [unclear].

J: Okay. I see. I only moved to this area about a year ago, so I'm not that familiar with it.

P: Oh, now I understand. You're lost. Yeah. [J: Yeah] Yeah, that's down here in Adams. Down going towards North Adams. That paper mill there. [J: Okay] Yeah. [J: Yeah] Then from there I went into Sprague's.

J: Yeah. May I ask why you left school to go to work?

P: Yup. Cause my father couldn't work.

J: Oh I see. That was because of a stroke. [P: Umhm, yeah] So uh, your mother then went to work, and [P: yeah, yeah], and your brothers and sisters as well?

P: I, I left school and went to work full time.

J: I see, uh huh. Well what sort of work did you do at the mill?

P: Uh, I worked on platers. They plated the paper. And we'd take them out. They come in stacks like that between linens. Big sheet. [Few words unclear] this big. And then after they plate them, put the finish on it, then we'd take it off. [J: Umhm] And then as we took this one off, then we'd put a fresh one in so they could go back to the rolls again.

J: I see. I'm going to move this a bit closer. [Speaking about microphone] So you only, you stayed at the mill then for a relatively short time? A couple of years did you say?

P: Uh, I was here not quite a year I don't think. May be it was a year before I went to Sprague.

J: Uh huh. What was the reason for leaving the mill so soon and taking the job at Sprague?

P: Well, the pay was better. [J: I see] Yeah.

J: Do you recall what you were earning at the mill, and what you were getting at Sprague when you first started?

P: Um, at uh, for forty-eight hours I got sixteen dollars. That was at uh, the paper mill. [J: At the, at the mill, uh huh] Uh huh. Then at Sprague's I got, I think it must have been about twenty-four dollars. [J: Uh huh] About eight dollars more. [J: Um, yeah] It doesn't sound like much, does it? [Chuckles]

J: I guess not. Not today anyway. Was that considered good pay though, back in those days?

P: At those days, yes. [J: Yeah, umhm] Of course your prices were so much lower.

J: Sure. So uh, you joined Sprague in 1943 was it?

P: Uh huh, March 1st, 1943.

J: Any particularly reason why that date stands out in your memory?

P: No. [J: No?] I don't know, it just stays there.

J: Yeah. Now you worked at the Brown Street Plant, [P: umhm] at Sprague? And uh, uh, what was your job there when you first started?

P: Uh, I use to wind um, what they call meter multipliers. It's a resistor for the Navy. [J: Umhm] We used to wind them.

J: Umhm. So uh, this of course was during World War II. [P: Umhm] And your work involved producing products for the war effort.

P: Yeah, yup, yeah.

J: Uh huh. Uh, were there others at the paper mill who, who joined Sprague during the war like you did for the uh (--)

P: No, not that I can recall.

J: No, uh huh. [P: no] Um, did you have other family members, or friends at Sprague?

P: My sister-in-law worked for a little while. Then uh, she left and went down, joined my brother when he was stationed in Florida. [J: Umhm, umhm] But uh, then my sister, she worked until her husband was discharged from the service. [J: Umhm] And then, well she left too.

J: Umhm, I see. Um, how many hours a week did your work at Sprague, uh, during the war?

P: Usually around, around forty-eight.

J: Forty-eight? [P: Umhm] Was that considered a standard work week back in those days?

P: Um, uh, (--)

J: Cause you mentioned that you worked forty-eight hours at the, at the paper mill also.

P: We worked forty hours at the paper mill, [J: oh] unless they wanted overtime. We'd go in on Saturdays. [J: I see] Same as there. [J: Okay] Your standard hours was forty. [J: Forty, I see] Yeah, but if you had to work the overtime, well then you work it, [J: umhm] depending on what they wanted. [J: Yeah] But of course in those days a woman could only work forty-eight hours. [J: I see] You couldn't, a woman couldn't work any longer than that, and more than that.

J: Hm, yeah. Did you chip at the work more than forty-hours a week? [P: Hm?] Did uh, more often than not, did you work more than forty-hours a week?

P: Um, depending on how your orders came in really. [J: Yeah] You might go for a period of five, six months and then you go back on forty-hours, and then you go back again. I really can't tell you?

J: I see. And uh, so you, you were paid a based rate of pay. I mean it wasn't based on your, on piece work, on how much you produced? Do I understand you correctly?

P: No. We were on bonus work. We called it bonus. Yes, bonus or piece work. [J: Bonus work?] Whatever you want. We had a base pay. [J: Umhm] I can't even remember what that is now. Say, I can't remember.

J: Well the figure I thought you quoted earlier (--)

P: But then after a certain, you put out a certain amount, anything of that is your bonus, they call it.

J: I see. And that bonus was based on how much additional work your put out.

P: Umhm, umhm.

J: Uh huh. And um, how many other people were in your department doing the same type of work as you? Any idea? Do you recall?

P: Okay. [Pauses] I never had to. Boy, it must have been about twenty, twenty-five there doing the same particular type of work as I did.

J: Umhm. Twenty, or twenty-five you're saying? [P: Umhm] Okay. Um, okay. So what was, what was your work day. I mean what hours did you, did you work most often? [P: well] Did you the, the same shift, or did that change?

P: Yeah, yeah. Morning shift we'd go in for six and get out at two-thirty then.

J: Six to two-thirty?

P: Yeah. [J: And uh] And unless we had to work overtime, well then it would be six to um, six to three-thirty I think. Was it six to three? And then we worked on Saturday mornings.

J: Umhm. Every Saturday, or just when, when you were needed?

P: Whenever they, we had to, or, or how depends on how your schedule was. [J: Yeah] Yeah.

J: So six to two-thirty was your usual work day. Uh (--)



P: That was eight hours.

J: Yeah. [P: Yeah] And uh, what about breaks and lunch time?

P: Oh, we had a break in the morning and a break in the afternoon. I think approximately fifteen minutes and fifteen minutes, and a half hour for, for lunch at that time.

J: For lunch, uh huh. Yeah. And um, okay. Uh, so you were at Sprague then from 1943 until when? How long were you there?

P: I've been out of work now, let's see. I've been retired two years. Makes two years in July that I've been out.

J: So you worked at Sprague's from '43 to '85?

P: Umhm. And I was there (--)

J: Summer of '85? Uh huh.

P: I was here forty-three years, anyway I would have been. [J: Umhm] Because I was layed off in (--) Yeah, I'd be forty two and a half years.

J: Yeah, that's right. [P: Yup] From forty-three to eighty-five. Yeah that would be (--)

P: About that approximately.

J: Yeah. What was it like working at Sprague's during the war. I mean was there a lot of uh, did you, did you place a lot of importance on your work, because you were doing work for the war effort, to support the war?

P: Well I think everybody did. [J: Yeah] Everybody. I mean it's just not myself, everybody felt that way. [J: Umhm] But it was also, it was a, it was a pleasure going in really. It's, it's different today than it was back then. I think we were a little more relaxed.

J: Little more relaxed?

P: Or either that, or it's because we were younger. [Chuckles] But um, no, towards the end there, the last year I think I noticed a big difference in Sprague's. The rules are different and you know?

J: Umhm. So it um, (--)

P: But everybody, I think everybody put their effort into it, [J: umhm] because I mean we always (--) Because they got quite a few awards there. That's what I was looking for, because we had one, [unclear] had a book about one of the awards. But I can't, as I say, it must be

packed in there and I can't lift boxes right now.

J: Yeah. These were awards that were given to employees [P: from the government] from the government. I see.

P: Yeah. Sprague got what they called, I think it was an "E" award they used to call it then. [J: Uh huh] And uh, for the work put out and the work was goo.

J: Umhm. So uh, this feeling that you were doing something important during the war, was that something that was uh, um, that, that you as an employee just felt within yourself, or was it something that the management tried to encourage? I mean did they uh, (--)

P: I think everybody felt that way. Everybody had somebody in service, [J: Yeah] you know? And I think everybody felt that way anyway.

J: Um. Cause uh, you know, I remember (--) Well I wasn't around then, but I mean I remember seeing uh, the um, sort of um, patriotic um, propaganda if you will, put out by the government to uh, get the folks here at home to support the war. And uh, I wondered if maybe something like that was going on in the plant itself.

P: No, no.

J: With posters and, and film strips and that sort of thing.

P: No, no.

J: Okay. Um, how many people were employed at Sprague during the war? Do you have any idea?

P: No. No. As I say, of course they had the other flats too. [J: Umhm] They not only had Brown Street, they had the Beaver and then they had Marshall Street.

J: Yeah. Did they have a lot of (--) Hire a lot of employees during the war due to the production demands. Was there a big uh, hiring effort during the, during the war that you recall? Let me ask you how you happened to go to Sprague? How did you hear about the job?

P: Oh, I see what you're referring to. Well, let's see now. I guess my sister-in-law, she had worked there once before she married my brother. [J: Umhm] And I think that's what, more or less was why we decided to go get our job. Leave the place we weren't making the money, to go for a place we would make more money.

J: Umhm, I see. How did you get to and from work? Uh, (--)

P: Bus.

J: By bus. [P: Umhm] Umhm, okay. [P: Yeah] And uh (--)

P: [Unclear] we got up early in the morning to leave the house. We had to leave the house probably about, about quarter past five to get the bus that comes anywhere between quarter past and half past five and to work for six.

J: Yeah. And you got home the same way then? [P: Umhm] By bus. Uh huh. Um, on your lunch break uh, did the uh, plant have a cafeteria, or (--) [P: Umhm] I see. So uh, you didn't have to go out for your meals. You could (--)

P: No, unless you wanted to.

J: Unless you wanted to. Oh, yeah. Or you, suppose you could take a bag lunch, paper bag lunch?

P: Well that's usually what I did. [J: Yeah] Unless there was something downstairs that I liked particularly. [J: Right] Yeah.

J: So uh, the uh, the particular thing that you were producing in the plant, I forget now what you called it?

P: It was called Monitor Multiplier. It's a resistor. [J: Umhm] I think a form of a resistor, oh, about this long, and it was sectioned. And then you'd wind it with uh, a very fine wire. [J: Umhm] So many turns. Of course it was all automatic, your machine anyway. [J: I see] And then you'd uh, just go from one and then you'd do so many, you'd have your work checked. Make sure you didn't break any wires or anything like that. [Unclear]

J: So you did just one thing to this resistor. You just, you didn't put the whole thing together from scratch? You just had one specific task? [P: Umhm, umhm] One thing to do. You wound, wound the wire around it?

P: Wound it up, yeah.

J: That was your job? [P: Hm] I see. And how long would that take to do one of those resistors? Your particular job? I mean was it you know, could you, could you estimate a minute, more than a minute uh, several minutes?

P: Well, gee, I really can't tell. Now it's been so long. [J: Yeah] [Long pause]

J: That's all right.

P: Yeah. I can't really estimate the time it would take to complete one.

J: Yeah. In winding this wire around the transistor, did you just use your hands, or did you have tools?

P: No, you just guided the wire, the wire itself on the machine. And you spool it, wire was up there and you come down and you feed it down. And you'd go that way. And you just take it

and you had a knife to scrape it. And um, so you could test it. [J: Umhm] That's about all you had to do to it.

J: So, so you sort of guided it down and then (--)

P: Yeah, and it just wound around the spool. [J: I see] See, we'd go right around there, that was it. We'd go right in back.

J: So the machine did most of the work for you?

P: Yeah, half the work, yeah.

J: Yeah. I see. So you mentioned that you had someone checking your work.

P: Yeah. We had a girl there that would check the work. She worked at a, a more of a desk. [J: Umhm] And she had a meter there that was connected to the tables somehow. Don't asked me how it was connected now. But she would check our work when we'd holler for a check. [J: Yeah] And then she would check and make sure it was reading all right. Had it come up to a certain, certain standard. So if it wasn't, then we either had to add on or take off, or, or if there was a broken wire it would show.

J: Yeah. So she didn't have to leave her station to do that? She didn't have to walk down the line, or anything like that?

P: No,no.

J: She could do that right where she was sitting. [P: Yeah, umhm] Okay. That's interesting. Um, I should have asked you earlier when we were talking about your family background? What nationality your, your uh, ancestors are on your father's side. Do you know?

P: [Laughing] Yes. He's French and English.

J: French and English. And your mother?

P: My mother is French, Scotch, Irish and Indian. [J: Um] That's why I have to laugh.

J: What, the Indian part? [P: Huh?] What are you laughing at? The Indian?

P: I always say I'm a mongrel. [Laughs]

J: Uh. Yeah, okay. I should have also asked you if you belong to any church or (--)

P: I belong to the First Congregational Church.

J: Uh huh. Okay. Now you're in Adams down the, down the street there? Okay. Um, so you mentioned that you had a sister-in-law at Sprague also?

P: Umhm, and a sister [unclear].

J: And a sister at Sprague. [P: Yeah] And uh, I believe you said earlier that your sister-in-law worked there before you did?

P: Yeah, she worked there before she married my brother. [J: I see] Now when she married him, then she quit.

J: And your sister worked at the same time at Sprague?

P: No, she worked during the war while her husband was in service. And then when he came out, well then she quit.

J: Yeah, I see. Was she doing the same type of work as you?

P: No, no. Her work was different. She worked in a different department.

J: What did she do? Do you recall?

P: No, I couldn't even tell you [J: okay] what her job was.

J: Uh huh. You mentioned earlier also that uh, the work was enjoyable uh, early on, you know, during the early years. [P: Um] Did you make a lot of friends on the job?

P: I had uh, well I think we were all friendly, but I think there was only one or two that I really particularly made friends with. And any, any department I went in, I never made an awful lot of friends. [J: Umhm] I'd just meet a couple that I like and [few words unclear].

J: And were these friends that you saw outside of work? I mean did you go places together, do things outside of work?

P: No.

J: Or did you just see them at Sprague?

P: No, we'd go out and eat, or something like that. But at night, no, no. We'd more or less would each go home and do what (--) we stayed home more or less, you know?

J: I see. I see. So while you were working at Sprague were you still living at home then with your parents, or (--)

P: I always lived with my parents.

J: I see. Uh huh. And um, okay. I asked you about your work when you first started at Sprague. [P: Umhm] Did that change over the years? Um, (--)

P: Yes, I've had quite a few different jobs in Sprague's.

J: And how long were you working on this transistor that you told me about?

P: Um, that was only during the war. That was what, about two years. Then when the war ended [J: yeah] then we were layed off. And then when I was called back (--)

J: How long were you layed off?

P: About six weeks.

J: Six weeks? [P: uh huh] And that was just after the war ended?

P: Umhm, yeah, because then they had to re (--)

J: [Retool?]

P: Yeah. Then I went in and I poured wax. That, you're quite, you're confused.

J: [Laughs] Sounds messy.

P: It's a big, big vat that they put big chunks of wax in, wax in. [J: Umhm] And uh, they had to, I think they would call them a small resister about this big that somebody would roll, paper roll. And you put them, insert them in a rack. You have a rack and you insert them in tubes then. And then you put these on. [J: Um] Then you take it, you turn the faucet on. And just be careful you don't burn yourself and fill it full of wax.

J: Umhm. Did you wear gloves, or mittens, or anything to protect your hands? No, nothing like that?

P: No.

J: What about other safety equipment? Did you have any, any safety equipment at all?

P: No! [Laughs]

J: How often did you have an accident? [Both laugh]

P: Not then, no.

J: Did you have many accidents? I mean uh, did you scald yourself?

P: Oh I got burned quite a few times. [J: Yeah] Yeah. Wax burns, [unclear] burns and things like that.

J: Yeah, yeah. Was there any sort of infirmary or clinic at the plant?

P: Yeah. Yes. We had a, an infirmary as you called it. And uh, we had a nurse on duty, [J: umhm] which they don't have now I don't think. They don't have any nurse on duty anymore. [J: Hm] Yup.

J: Uh, that's interesting. No sort of safety equipment then. Nothing to protect the workers?

P: Not then.

J: How about an apron, or anything like that?

P: Well you wore your own.

J: You brought your own?

P: You furnished your own. They didn't furnish it.

J: And if you wanted any gloves, or anything like that you brought your own then?

P: No. Well if we had to have gloves, yes, they would, they would furnish them. But on that job I can't remember now if I wore any gloves. I don't think so.

J: Uh huh. Hm.

P: No, because I got too many burns.

J: So uh, this wax job then, how long were you doing that?

P: Uh, let's see. I was on that line, oh probably about, probably about eight years when that moved out. If it was that long, I don't know. They moved that up, up to [unclear] Vermont, that line. [J: Umhm] Then I went down onto another line. And I stamped work, the finished product. And uh, I tested it [unclear]. [J: Hm] I'm trying to think of the name. It's [unclear] It tests for your capacity. Otherwise it uh, checks, you'd check the work and make sure the capacity is there.

J: The stamp that you placed on the uh, item, [P: umhm] was that a company seal, or (--)

P: Umhm, yeah. It was their name. And then you put the serial number and um, and uh, the reading. The reading of the unit. Say if it was 6.7, or within, that was marked on it.

J: Umhm. What other jobs had you had at Sprague?

P: Well I've soldered, I've assembled, I've tested, I've worked in Marshall Street there for a little while. And um, out from the lab there in one of the little rooms there were, we made uh, new products that came in [J: um] until they got going. And then they send them to another place to

work. [J: Umhm] And uh, (--)

J: So, so most of your work though was done at the Brown Street Plant?

P: Yes, yeah.

J: But you did spend some time at Marshall Street?

P: Yeah. I was uh, up at the union mill there. We use to wind uh, coils up there. But I stayed there about um, three months. I didn't like it. [J: Um] And uh, I signed and uh, at that time you could sign, you could sign to go if you wanted a different job. And I signed to go down to Marshall Street. [J: Umhm] I did inspection work there, which I liked. [J: Umhm] But that went out. And then I went up to the Beaver. I was up the Beaver for about five months. [J: Umhm] And I didn't like that job. I didn't like it up there [unclear].

J: What did you do there at the Beaver Street Plant?

P: Um, soldering.

J: Soldering. [P: Umhm] What was about it?

P: It was a different kind of soldering. It was when you buttered the work. They spread the solder around, the stick solder.

J: What was it about it that you didn't like?

P: I just didn't like the job and I didn't care much for (--). Well let's (--). I don't want to go into that. [J: Okay] I just didn't like it, period. [J: Okay] And uh, I signed and went down to Brown Street. [J: Umhm] Back down Brown Street. And I stayed there until I got layed off.

J: When was that then?

P: I'm trying to figure out now. I was out sick and uh, when I went back, layed off. Let me see. Oh, I know what it is. I had to, they had to lay me off because I couldn't do the work, the job that they had open for me [J: Umhm]. And so I got layed off. And uh, I had to go in Brown Street. Uh, back to Marshall. That's when I went into the lab. See, I have a ruptured disk and I can't do [J: I see] all kinds of work. So therefore, this last one here, I was layed off. I went over there and worked in the lab there, [J: umhm] until that was going out. And then I went back to Brown Street. Went up into what they called the Mica Department. That was soldering and assembling. And then that went out. They sold that department.

J: When was that?

P: Uh, as I said, was '85.

J: '85 it was?



P: Umhm. [Comment unclear]

J: I see. So in the years that you worked at Sprague, how many times were you layed off? You mentioned once very early on.

P: Well let's say I'm layed off, they lay you off from one job and they transfer you to another. But actually, being out of work I was layed off twice. [J: Umhm] And the first time was six weeks. And the second time, I don't know if it was three weeks. Then of course I was layed off, when the department went out I was out six months then. [J: I see] But I went right into retirement then.

J: Okay, yeah. The first lay off occurred, I believe you said (--)

P: Right after the war.

J: Right after the war. The second one then was?

P: Uh, (--)

J: If you can't pin it down to an exact year, maybe uh, maybe within a few years. Could you?

P: Oh, I would say approximately uh, it had to be in the '70's then.

J: Early, early '70's?

P: Early '70's, late '60's, early '70's. So really to be out of work out of there, I really wasn't, because I was just transferred. I was layed off from one job, but I'd be transferred to another department.

J: I see. Uh, besides the paid bonuses that you mentioned before, uh, were there any other sort of uh, um, bonus pay? Like say Christmas bonus, end of the years bonuses, profit sharing, anything like that?

P: Yeah. Yes. Yeah.

J: All of what I mentioned, or were there Christmas bonuses?

P: Yes. Yes.

J: And (--)

P: They negotiated that now. I can't remember how long it lasted though. Is that right after the war, or was it before? Because I know that was a hundred dollar bonus. [J: Umhm] Of course they minus taxes, where you don't have a hundred.

J: Right. And was there any sort of profit sharing with employees? [P: must nod head] No.

P: Not that I know of. [J: Uh huh] We never heard about it.

J: You never got any? So I guess there wasn't. Okay. Um, can you give me some idea as to how your pay improved over the years? Now you said when you first started it was how much per week?

P: We got about approximately \$24.00.

J: And, plus anything additional that you got from additional work?

P: That's right.

J: So it was twenty-four when you first started and then uh, after the war, let's go back to after the war. What was your pay immediately after the war?

P: It depends on the job that you have, really. [J: Yeah] I can't say really. I know I increased as the jobs, the more the jobs. It depends on, on uh, see on the bonus, when I say bonus work, it goes by so much for base pay and then so much whatever you earn over that. It's the same as piece work I would assume. And um, of course the more you put out the better your pay was. [J: Yeah] So I really, I (--)

J: Well let me ask you this. When you left Sprague how much were you getting? How much were you earning per week, or per year if that would be easier?

P: No, it's not any easier either. [J: No?] Oh dear. [Few words unclear] so it had to be around fourteen, fifteen thousand for the year I think. [J: Yeah, umhm] I'd have to look up on my (--)  
[J: Yeah, uh huh] It's somewhere in there. But between fourteen thousand, fifteen thousand. So it's a big improvement from, [J: sure] from what you were earning before.

J: Yeah. Um, was there any sort of um, um, you know, company picnics, um, parties, Christmas parties?

P: They, but they didn't have those until later. Later they had a couple of picnics I know. And then of course they have uh, the 25th, when you've been there twenty-five years they have a, a dinner for all of the employees [J: Umhm] that are uh, with that, been there twenty five years. And then they give them, I don't know if they still do or not, a watch and a pin and [J: umhm] all that junk. [J: Laughs] And uh, I think the last couple of years that I was there they did have picnics, but I never bothered to go to them.

J: I see.

P: But outside of the people that I worked with, sometimes we'd have a, we'd go out. Like we'd have a Christmas party. And we'd either go like to uh, [unclear] or someplace like that. [J: Yeah, uh huh] But be our own department.

J: Now were you a member of the union when you were at Sprague? [P: Umhm] You were a union member? [P: Umhm] Which one was that?

P: Both of them. Uh, the ICW was the first one. That was your independent union when I first worked there. Then I went into the IUE after. [J: Umhm] Yeah.

J: I understand there was a company union also? Um, was there anything like that? I remember reading (--)

P: That's, that's the independent, ICW.

J: That was the independent, okay. [P: Yup] I see. All right.

P: It wasn't a national, it was one that was just in.

J: I see. [P: uh huh] I understand there were strikes, or a least one major one that I know of in 1970? [P: Yeah] And uh, were you uh, on the picket line, or did you take an active role at all?

P: I was out.

J: You were out of work?

P: Yeah. I think there was only two strikes that I can really recall. There was one before that. Seventy was the last one they had.

J: Were you an active union member? I mean were you very strong for the union? Did you uh,(--)

P: Not really. [J: No?] No. No, I just joined for a protection, job protection more than anything.

J: I see. Uh huh.

P: I didn't go to any meetings or anything like that.

J: But you supported the union when it went out on strike? And you supported its, its aims.

P: Oh yes, oh yes. I wouldn't cross the picket lines. Of god, no. [J: Yeah, yeah] No. And uh (--)

J: Was that rough though, being out on strike and (--)

P: Well there's no pay coming in. [J: Right]

J: Did you get any, any (--)

P: So that the bank book's going, bank book goes down. [J: Yeah] Yeah. And as far as, you mean compensation?

J: Yeah. I mean, did, was, was your fund that the union had to help out?

P: No unless you uh, were out on the picket line or something like that. Then they give you so much. [J: I see] But if you didn't, well then you didn't get anything.

J: Umhm, I see. So you managed to get buy then, or just on savings, or (--)

P: Umhm.

J: I see. Um, okay. [Long pause] What were working condition like? Not, I asked you about safety equipment and I mean was it, was it a pleasant working atmosphere, or was it uh (--) I mean personally I've worked in factories and I know how hot it got. Uh, you know, the air wasn't, wasn't the best you know, because of the uh, the fumes. So did you have to put up with that sort of thing on the job?

P: Uh, oh dear. How can I put that? Yes, I'd say yes. Because uh, when you solder, I don't care if they have solder guns, they had the guns, but you still get fumes in your face. [J: sure] And uh, it don't matter how you, how you work, or where you work you still get fumes. [J: Umhm] And uh, when you clean work or anything like that with the cleaner, there's always an odor to the cleaners [J: sure] and then degreasers and all of that stuff. [J: yeah] There's still odor. Yeah.

J: Is that something that you just got use to over time? Was it something that, that (--)

P: Yes, you do. You get use to it after awhile. [J: Um] I always say they always cry because people smoke, but they should into the mills and clean them up first. [J: {Laughs} Yeah, yeah] So. But it's true. They uh, they, I don't think they could ever fix anyplace, work place where you wouldn't have any fumes. I really don't think so.

J: Yeah, umhm. Were you um, basically left, left to your own devices on the job, or did you have a lot of supervision?

P: Oh no. No, no, no, no. We, after we learned our job, even if you ran into complications, you always had to call, call, well we called them our supervisor then. [J: umhm] And uh, or instructor, whatever you want to call them. And they'd come and help you. Oh no, we always had somebody there to help us. [J: Umhm] And um, they'd tell you what job you want, they wanted out next and all of that stuff. [J: Umhm] Yeah.

J: Hm. Okay. [Long pause] I'm going to take you back even further uh, before the war, World War II. Um, the uh, depression years. Now uh, you were a relatively young person at that time. You said you were born in '24. [P: Umhm] So depression hit in '29, [P: umhm] and continued until the war(--)

P: Yeah, I still remember it.

J: Um, so um, do you have any um, personal recollections of your family life during those depression years and what it was like?

P: Very rough, very rough.

J: Umhm.

P: Yup. And so wasn't the jobs. My father, he was out of work there for awhile. [J: Umhm] And um, it was hard! [J: Umhm] The money wasn't coming in and it uh (--)

J: How, how were families getting by then. You know, both your family and the family that, families of your friends. I mean how did they manage during those years?

P: Well you made your own clothes and you grew your own food. [J: Umhm] And you always, my mother always managed. [J: umhm] She always made us our clothes, our coats and my brother's suits, and everything. [J: Yeah, hm.] And uh (--)

J: When, when President Roosevelt came in, he uh, introduced a lot of programs to help the people out during the war. Uh, during depression rather. [P: Yeah, my father] Did any of that help your family directly?

P: My father worked on what they called the WPA, on construction jobs, on putting in sidewalks and bridges here in Adams. [J: Umhm] Yup, yeah. A lot of people got help that way. [J: Umhm] And uh, yeah it did help out. I mean, it uh (--)

J: So uh, you mentioned that you started work after your father got ill. [P: um] Before then, during the depression, you were still in school. [P: umhm] So you were not working then? [P: No.] Did you have any sort of after school jobs, or weekend jobs, or anything like that? [P: No] Okay.

P: They didn't believe in us working then, my mother. [J: I see] She didn't want me to go to work when I did go to work.

J: Uh, hm. What was it like growing up in Adams during that time? Um, you know, as a child what are your recollection?

P: Yeah, I think everybody was the same more or less. Everybody was in the same fix, and nobody saw, nobody tried to out-do one another, that's for sure. [J: Umhm] [Few words unclear] been a big change in Adams with the mill torn down, and where the Post Office is now. The Post Office wasn't there. [J: Umhm] And there's, there's still a change. And a big change in North Adams too, [J: Um] as far as that's concerned. [J: Umhm] All of the stores that are, were on one side of the street, they're all gone now. [J: umhm] And you know, there was a big change in (--) I think nobody thought anything about what others, somebody else had. We were all, we were all the same. You know, we're all, during the depression years everybody was all

the same, in the same boat.

J: Umhm, yeah.

SIDE ONE ENDS

SIDE TWO BEGINS.

J: You mentioned very early on uh, during the interview, that the work environment changed quite a bit during the war. Um, it was different from how it was when you left, when you retired. Can you explain that a little bit more? How it changed? Why it seemed to change?

P: Well I think they put restrictions on the people.

J: You talking about management now?

P: Yeah. Because I noticed when I, as I said, when I went back to Brown Street I noticed that you couldn't go from, they had an eating area, you couldn't go downstairs to eat like they used to. [J: Umhm] You couldn't go and talk to somebody in another department, or, where at one time they never really put that much restriction. [J: Umhm] No, I really think that there was a big difference. You could feel it. I really was very disappointed when I went back there, because I always felt like Brown Street was my home. [J: Umhm] And uh, but uh, they, there was restrictions. And you couldn't do this, and you couldn't do that.

J: Hm. Why do you think that happened? Why do you think?

P: Change in management.

J: There were all those change in management? [P: Umhm] Did the rules seem to have any purpose, or were they just kind of arbitrary, just for the sake of making rules?

P: Yes, to me that's all it was really. [J: Yeah] Cause really you, when you went in there to work, you went into work. Sometimes you'd probably go through a department to take something from one place to another. Say if you had to check some work or something like that, and you had to go down through. You see somebody you know, you stop and say hi, and you talk a few minutes, but they don't let you do that now. [J: Hm] To me it was just uh, a change in the management. Of course they got rid of some of that management. I don't know how it is now. The way I understand it, I don't know if I want to be back. But uh, I did, I was really disappointed in a lot of things. Because it um, it just didn't make sense sometimes.

J: Would you have stayed longer at Sprague do you think, had that not happened? Had there not been that change? Or were your reasons for leaving health reasons?

P: No, I had planned on sixty-two. As I said, I have the ruptured disc [J: right] and it got, it got to a point where it was really aggravating the back where I was having a hard time. [J: Yeah] And um, no, I was, I was planning (--) I'd like to be working I'll tell you. I love, I love to work. [J: umhm] And uh, but you just can't do those things sometimes.

J: Sure, sure. Um, that paper that you showed me that went out to employees. Um, how often did that come out? The Logue?

P: Uh, we got it once a month I think it was.

J: Was that a popular reading [P: yeah, yeah] newsletter for the employees? [P: Yeah] Yeah.

P: Yeah. Not many people were employed [unclear]. Employees was 51 in the service. They lost 18 men.

J: Yeah. Did the employees have any part in writing the stories for this?

P: Yeah, umhm. [J: I see] Yeah, yeah. They uh, had (--) Each, each department had to report it.

J: I see. Oh really! [P: Yeah, yeah] Did you uh, have anything to do with it? [P: No.] No?

P: No, no. Now see there? And it tells you who got married [J: umhm] and the engagements. And some of them can put their pictures in. And this is one of them here. They're all, they're from different departments there. [J: Umhm] And they put their picture, picture to the family and something like that. [J: Umhm, hm] But uh, no, yeah, it come out, every month we'd get that. I still can't understand why I saved this one. I've been going through it and looking through it, but I uh, I can't. This gives you the list of all of the people that were the reporters for the different departments. [J: Umhm, hm]

J: Um, as far as your work hours are concerned. Now you said, you know, when you first started, I guess that was during the war, that uh, what, forty-hours was typical, but sometimes you worked a forty-eight? [P: Umhm] And that was a maximum you could work?

P: Yeah, yeah. At that time. When uh, but uh, just before we left I guess, well I think there was more or less a government restriction. [J: umhm] A woman could only work forty-eight hours. [J: Yeah] That's it.

J: And did your work week hours change through the years?

P: Yes. Yeah. We done work from seven to quarter of four. Then I worked seven to four, with an hour for lunch, which I never liked. Unless you went upstreet, which I couldn't do. [J: Yeah] Because I couldn't go up and walk up, upstreet and walk around the street.

J: Yeah. But as far as your total work hours for the week?

P: It was always about the same, forty hours.

J: It was always about forty hours a week?

P: Yeah, unless you had to work the overtime. [J: Right] They had work to get out. [J: Umhm] Until we went down on Brown Street. Then when the department went out, well then let's see. I worked um, some weeks it was um, nine hours a day and eight hours on Saturday. So that would be about fifty-three hours. We worked until we were layed off.

J: Now how many shifts did, did Sprague have?

P: They used to at one time have um, three shifts in some departments, but most of where women worked it was just the two shifts. And now I guess they can work the third shift. [J: Umhm.] Now, but uh, because they [few words unclear] the laws.

J: Yeah. During the war did Sprague work around the clock? Uh, I mean did it operate day and night?

P: Well depending on, on your job.

J: On the job, uh huh.

P: Yup. As I says, women could only work was the first and second shift. And uh, some departments worked the three shifts.

J: Umhm. [P: Yeah] Have there always been three shifts uh, at Sprague during the years that you were there?

P: Yes. [J: Yeah] Yeah and some departments had to run that way. [J: Right] Especially like in your, in the impregnation room. They always had to have your three shifts more or less. [J: Umhm] You can't impregnate the work. [J: Okay] And uh, (--)

J: I'm sorry.

P: No, I'm was going to say something, but it slipped my mind. [Long pause]

J: Okay. Um, why don't we stop right here. [Tape shuts off momentarily]

This is Jim Ivancic um, interviewing Phyllis Griswold. This is the second interview for the Sprague Oral History Project. It's a continuation of an interview begun last night, May 18, 1988.

J: Okay. I asked you last night about um, the other jobs that you did at Sprague, apart from your work during the war. And we talked some about that. Um, I want to continue on that for a little bit more. [P: Yeah] And uh, um, tell me if you would, uh, about the sort of training that you got for each job that you did. Was there a lot of training?



P: Well you got on the job training. You had uh, uh, supervisor or an instructor that would sit there and train you on what you had to do. The type of work you were doing. Your soldering and how, how, how to smoothe it out. And they, they taught you that way. They taught you reading the meters. Make sure your work was right. Because sometimes some jobs you had to test your own work. So they taught you how to read the meters.

J: The meters gauged whether you were doing the job accurately?

P: Uh, it gauged, it gauged oh dear, the reading, the reading of the work. Otherwise, let's say it's suppose to read 6.70 and you had a certain percentage that you could go with. Go say probably, probably about, maybe about 5% or something like that in building your work. [J: Yeah] Well then that meter would tell you. And then you built your work until you got it up to a certain capacity. [J: Umhm] And that's how you test your work. And then when you got it up to that and then you build it from there. You finished it.

J: So yeah. Um, so you held how many different jobs at Sprague during the years that you were there? You listed them last night. Uh, and uh, maybe you could just run down each of them briefly for me again. Um (--)

P: Let's see. I worked in uh, as I said, the resistors. [J: Umhm] I worked on the wax line, the PPA line. I worked on the Sandia line. I worked in (--)

J: I'm sorry, what was that?

P: Sandia. [J: Sandia] That's the government job. Yeah.

J: I see. What did that stand for? Sandia?

P: I have no idea. [J: You don't know] They don't tell. We didn't know. [J: I see] Yeah. No, that was government work and that's all we know.

J: That was something classified? Um, something only a few people knew what it was for?

P: Actually I don't know if there was too many of them down there that I worked with knew what it was for, because it was shipped out to another, another area. [J: Yeah] So I really don't know what they used it on. [J: Umhm] Then we built what they called a network. That was different types of units that went into launching pads and things like that. [J: Umhm] That was another government project. Part of it. [J: Umhm] And um, this last one I was building was in a Mica Department, but I have no conceivable idea of what it went into. [J: Uh huh, yeah] It was something that they rolled out sections. One girl would roll the sections. Then they [unclear] them and it felt just like [knocks on heavy metal] would sound like, hard. [J: Okay] And then they built them. And then we would finish them up, solder them and finish them. Glue them together and that. [J: Yeah. Uh] Now I have no idea what they use those for though.

J: So you got training and supervision on each job.

P: Yeah. Oh yes, yes. And uh, any, any uh, problems you had, they just came and helped you straighten it out. [J: Yeah] They'd sit and work with you until you could get it straightened out. And uh, when I worked in the lab, we built a small little unit. And that was a rolled unit and it went on to a plastic cover, welded on. [J: Umhm] And then from there we um, would uh, I'm trying to figure out now how it went. We'd impregnate it. No, we'd seal it first, then impregnate it, and then wash it, dry it. Then you stamp them. And I have no [unclear] to plug in, in unit, but I have no idea what that one is.

J: Umhm, umhm. So were you and, you were not the only person doing [P: Oh no. No.] one particular function. I mean I'm trying to visualize how this worked. Was it like an assembly line, where each person did one task?

P: In the uh, uh, the lab, yes. Each one of us had a different type of work to do. And then we would vary it from day to day. Each one would take a turn on a different job. [J: Umhm] Otherwise you might weld here and tomorrow you might work over here assembling something else. [J: Umhm] That's the way we went.

J: But in the other departments where you worked, [P: in the other departments] there were many other people doing what you were doing?

P: Yeah, yeah. As you say, sometimes there'd be as many as um, twenty, thirty, thirty people and we'd all be doing the same. Probably different size units and uh, but all the same process. [J: Umhm] Really.

J: What was the hardest job that you had? I think you, you mentioned it last night. The uh, when you were working with the, with the wax. Was that the most unpleasant?

P: That was one of the hardest jobs. [J: Yeah] I think [stove?] soldering was the worst.

J: Why was that?

P: Well you had a pot of solder, [J: umhm] and then you take and you dip your wire into the solder, [J: yeah] bring it down into your plate. And then you solder your unit on, then dry it up. Hope that you don't drop the solder on your hands.

J: Yeah. [P: Yup] Otherwise you would burn yourself. Yeah. [P: Umhm] What was the most (--)

P: I think that was the worst one.

J: Yeah. What was the most pleasant? What did you enjoy doing most there?

P: Uh, when I was in uh the network department. I think that was the most, because you built it right from, from the beginning, [J: Umhm] you know? [J: Yeah] And you built the unit. And you finished it all. [J: Yeah] Yeah, I think that was the most interesting.

J: Uh, we talked a little bit last night about working conditions. And I think you said that, that sometimes the uh, the air was foul and uh, [P: well] like it is in many, many factories.

P: Well you uh, yeah, in certain areas where degreasing and all of that, you're bound to get the smell of the degreasing fluid. [J: Sure, umhm] And other areas were, they were good. [J: Um] But like I said too, when you're soldering your vents don't always take all of the smoke away. You still get some of the smoke up into your face.

J: Did working conditions improve over the years? Uh, um, you know, looking back on, on when you started there and when you finished. Did the, did the uh, management, did the ownership gradually make improvement to the plant and to the work processes that made it more pleasant for the workers?

P: Well I'll be honest with you. I think I enjoyed it the first years and not the last, last couple of years. I think I was a little, as I say when I went back to Brown Street I was quite disappointed. [J: Umhm] In a way things were, were that way, but I really think that overall.

J: I'm not speaking here though of employee/management relations, um, how you were treated. I'm speaking more in terms of you know, the physical working conditions.

P: Oh, I see.

J: Uh, like uh, I don't know. Let me pose the question. You know, did the management say for example, install air conditioning. Um.

P: You had air conditioning in certain areas. Certain areas you couldn't have it. [J: Uh huh] They didn't have it. They had fans, but uh (--)

J: What areas had air-conditioning? Uh,

P: Just for certain types of work had to have it. Rolling and things like that. [J: Um] They had to roll the capacitors in a room that was, didn't have any humidity and [J: yeah, umhm] and things like that. But most of us worked outside. [J: Umhm] And frankly I prefer it to the air conditioned room.

J: Was there a lot of griping by employees about working conditions? Were they unhappy about, about that?

P: I think you'll always find a few that's more or less, they're not happy with any, with any jobs they had. No, I wouldn't say that, no.

J: Yeah. Did you find that, that things improved for the workers after the union uh, after the place was unionized and the union got strong? Do you think (--)

P: No, I don't think so.

J: You don't think things improved for the employees at all?

P: No.

J: What about in terms of pay and benefits?

P: In pay, pay scale went up. That's about all.

J: What about benefits like uh, health, hospitalization (--)

P: Well we always had that. [J: Uh huh] We always had that with the other union. [J: Comment unclear] But we had pension. We got the pension now.

J: You got the pension after the union came in?

P: The IUE came in. Yeah, we got the pension now. [J: Yeah] But no, I really can't see where (--). Maybe the other people see where we benefited more, but I can't really.

J: Do you think it hurt rather than helped? I'm talking about the union. Do you think it hurt having a union?

P: No, because we always had one. As I said, we always had one. [J: I see] Even when I first went there. Only it was an independent. It wasn't the national. [J: I see] See. So no, I don't know.

J: Did you see a difference between the two unions? I mean was the independent one less, um, did it, did it push on behalf of the workers as much as the national union did?

P: That's, that's kind of hard to [unclear]. [J: Yeah] Uh, probably some people would say yes, but [J: um] I know that there were times when we have had disputes and I think we did have better luck with the local union, in some areas.

J: With the, yeah, with the independent one.

P: Umhm. But I think a union is a union, no matter how you look at it.

J: Right.

P: You have to have them sometimes.

J: Sure. Um, I asked you a little about the strikes. And I think there were two during the time that you were there?

P: That I can remember. [J: that you were a member] Just the two. The last one as you, was in '70. And there was one before that.

J: There was one in the forties that I understand, that was (--)

P: Yeah, that's when the, with the independent. [J: Yeah] Yeah.

J: And that was during the time that you were there.

P: Umhm.

J: Okay. And uh (--)

P: So actually Sprague's, the people didn't go out on strike too much.

J: Yeah. How did you feel about, feel about the strikes though? Do you think they were justified, or not?

P: Yes, I'd say so. Because we really went for better wages and that. Because a lot of the wage increases we got, well they weren't that good. [J: Umhm] You'd get a, accept a penny raise, or a two penny raise, or a three penny raise cents an hour, really it's not very much. [J: Umhm] [Few words unclear] Uh, I better not say that. Well, I don't know how, how to, how to phrase that. But we, by striking I think we did help, try to help ourselves. But unless you yourself, or the people back your union to get you the stronger increases, the bigger increases, uh, you're not going to get them. It's up to the people. [J: Umhm] Your unions can only do so much for you. [J: Umhm] And if the people don't, don't back them, it's uh, it's hard too. And if they don't help themselves, they don't improve their benefits either.

J: Sure. I remember you told me last night that, that you supported the unions and its goals during the strike. [P: Umhm] And uh, even though it was unpleasant [P: yeah] and it was kind of a hardship, you supported what it was after.

P: Well yes. I've never crossed a pick, crossed the line to go to work. [J: Umhm] There were people that did it, but uh, I mean I believed in supporting the union no matter if it was hard. [J: Sure] Yeah.

J: And when you did go back to work were there hard feelings between those who didn't cross the picket lines and those who did?

P: Not that I noticed. No. I (--). If there was any I didn't see it where I worked. [J: Umhm] No.

J: You didn't have any hard feelings yourself towards those who crossed the line?

P: No. That, everybody has to do what they have to do. [J: Yeah] They know, they know their financial situations better than you do, you know?

J: Sure. Um, I know I asked you about your, your personal life before you uh, started working. You know, about school and family and so forth. But uh, once you started working at Sprague

um, what sort of things did you enjoy doing after work? You know, on your personal time. Uh, did you have any hobbies? I think you mentioned that you didn't chum around with the people that you worked with too much. Is that right?

P: Umhm. Yeah. No, everybody had their own, went their own way mostly when you left the shop. And uh, [few words unclear] we'd go square dancing when they use to have square dancing up in Cheshire, up at uh, Cheshire Grange. There was a, a group of us that would go. [J: Umhm] Or else we'd go to the movies, or something like that. Or out walking.

J: Were these school chums of yours? Old school friends, or?

P: No, no. [J: No.] No, they was people that I met a church. [J: I see] And uh, we used to go out together this group of us.

J: I think you said you went to First Congregational Church? [P: Umhm] Is that right? Did you begin, did you belong to any organizations? Civic groups? Church groups, besides?

P: No. No. No.

J: [Long pause] Did you have any work related injuries, or health problems during the time you were at Sprague? Did you (--)

P: You mean where I lost any time from work? [J: Yeah] No.

J: No. Aside from cold you know, that sort of thing? [P: Yeah, no.] Nothing like that then? [P: No.]

P: And what I have now it's nothing to do with working anyway.

J: Nothing work related?

P: No, no. Outside of minor burns or things like that, [J: yeah] no.

J: Right.

P: I never got any serious injuries.

J: When you had the disc problem, when that cropped up, did you miss some work time then?

P: Umhm, umhm. Yes, I had (--). It actually wasn't work related. I got out of the car one morning to go to work and I couldn't straighten up. I ruptured the disc just getting out of the car. And uh, I was out of work for three months. I had it operated on. No, no. I was out three months, went back to work and then I had the operation a year later.

J: I see. And uh, you had company sick benefits [P: umhm] and uh sick pay? [P: Yeah, umhm] So you were still, you still have some income coming in? [P: Oh yes, yeah] I better, I

had a house to support. [Laughs]

J: Yeah. Getting, getting back to the strikes again, before I forget, did you (--) I think I asked you this last night, but I'll ask you again. Did you take any active role in the strikes? Did you walk, walk the line, [P: no] picket line? [P: No. No.] Okay. Um, okay. Um, let me just ask you a few questions about (--) Ask you to look back on your years at Sprague. Um, how would you describe them in a few words? I mean were they generally enjoyable years at Sprague?

P: Umhm, umhm. I think that's one reason why I miss working. [J: Umhm] You miss the people that you work with. You chum around with in work. And uh, you get along with them. And I really do miss them. I do miss working. I miss, I miss being in there. I've got to be very honest with you.

J: You still see the people that you worked with?

P: Some of them. Yes, I belong to the retirees there. And uh, we have the meetings. I haven't been able to go since I moved, but I'm glad, I want to get back. And there's a few of us that we do go out once in awhile now to each, have lunch together, something like that. And it's a couple from Adams. One from Adams and one from Cheshire. And my sister an law, we go out every week. One day a week we go out someplace to eat and do a little shopping. And uh, but I did. I really (--) I can't say that I didn't enjoy working down there, because I did. Very much.

J: Do you have any regrets about the years there? I mean, would you do anything differently if you had the chance?

P: I don't think so. No. No, I know a lot of people used to say to me I should go out to GE, but I always liked Sprague's. [J: Yeah] I liked it there and I didn't want to go anyplace else.

J: Umhm.

P: I would have probably made more money, but.

J: Yeah. Did the, did Sprague family mingle with the workers at all? I mean did, was there kind of a personal bond between the Sprague's and the people who worked for them? Or was it like (-)

P: No, once in awhile they'd come through the plant and walk through. But actually no, they didn't come around that much. No.

J: Did you tell me that there were company picnics?

P: They had a couple here, a couple of years ago they had them. I don't know if they'll have anymore or not, but I know they have started to have some. But I didn't bother going. [J: Um] But I don't know if it was after I retired, or (--) But I know they had talked about they had a couple of them. [J: Umhm] Well.

J: Um, do you personally know of people who lost their jobs at Sprague during lay-offs and uh, you know. When the big lay-offs occurred in the 70's, did that hit your work department pretty hard, or in the people that you know, or?

P: Well yes, some of them got layed-off. Some I think went, ended up at the GE. [J: Yeah] But uh, I always was fortunate and I did get called back. [J: Yeah, yeah] Of course it depends on the area and how many people they need to. [J: Yeah] Then it went according to your seniority, which was another thing.

J: Yeah. I think you told me last night that the longest time you were out of work was a few months, a couple of months?

P: About, I think about six weeks at the most. [J: Uh huh, yeah.] Until the last lay-off. [J: Yeah] Because I think right after the war I was layed-off, but I, I didn't collect any unemployment, [J: Umhm] because I was called back. And uh, then when I was layed-off one other time I collected about two, probably three weeks of unemployment. Got called back. Actually I've been, when layed-off of one job I'd be transferred to another. [J: Yeah] So. Until this last time. But then as I say, I, there's so many, I can't, I can't do the work anymore anyways. [J: Yeah] So.

J: [Long pause] Were you sitting down at all of your jobs, or did it, [P: no] some of the work required you to stand? [P: Umhm] Yeah.

P: Yes, I'm used to it. You were standing depending on what you were doing, what kind of work you have. [J: Yeah] And some jobs you sat.

J: And this problem that you had, that made it difficult to stand, or was it sitting that was?

P: Both. [J: Both (laughs)] Yeah. If I sit on anything that's real hard then I can't, I can't straighten up. [J: Um] And uh, if I stand too long. I can't do the heavy lifting. [J: Umhm] I can't do the heavy pushing anymore. So there's a lot that you can't do.

J: Yeah. Hm. Okay. Uh, I think that will cover it, unless there's something that you think we've missed.

P: [Few words unclear] I'm trying, I'm trying to think too.

J: Did you think of anything else that we didn't cover last night, besides the uh, the work clothing?

P: No. I can remember one time, but it's not work related really. It was during work. We use to at our lunch hour, we'd either crochet or knit, or something like that. We had a bright idea we wanted to make snowmen out of cotton, you know. [J: Umhm] So one of the lady's, her brother worked for Hunters and they gave us a whole big roll of it. [J: Um] Oh we had a ball making them. [Laughs] I mean we really had a good time in the shop like that. I think that's one of the reasons why I never like to [unclear]. Because we did have a good time.



J: You made snowman, snowmen out of uh (--)

P: Snowmen and snow-women. Yeah.

J: Little ones for your desk, whatever?

P: Yeah, for Christmas there. You put them up for Christmas decorations. We made a lot of them. But we had a good time. We always had (--) I think I always worked with the nicest group of people. [J: Um] It's not really any department that I can't say that I didn't like the people.

J: Okay.

End of tape